

## **FY 2007 OHV Grant Public Release Drafts**

### **BLM Ridgecrest Field Office**

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS**

On August 1, 2006 the Bureau of Land Management, Ridgecrest Field Office, will submit for consideration to California State Parks, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Division, the following cooperative agreement assistance grants: 1) Facilities Operations and Maintenance, 2) Field Maintenance, 3) Law Enforcement; 4) Restoration, and 5) Equipment.

#### **BACKGROUND**

OHV management for the Ridgecrest Field Office tiers off the direction contained in the California Desert Conservation Plan, West Mojave Plan, Western Mojave Desert Off-Road Vehicle Designation Project, Jawbone-Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern and, Rand Mountain / Fremont Valley Management Plan.

Following are proposed cooperative agreement assistance grants:

#### **FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT: \$303,200**

The Ridgecrest Field Office is requesting grant funding to assist in providing and continuing its visitor services operations. Outreach and visitor services that we would continue and enhance will be the staffing of Jawbone Station, maintenance of field information kiosk, cleaning and stocking of restroom facilities in Jawbone Canyon and Dove Springs OHV Open Areas. The installation of barriers to prevent OHV trespass onto the Pacific Crest Trail, off of designated routes, and into wilderness areas are other projects that will be undertaken designed to improve the public lands and recreational experiences. We are also requesting funding to be used towards salaries for two visitor services OHV Park Rangers, two Park Aides, and an Outdoor Recreation Planner specializing in OHV management.

#### **TRAIL MAINTENANCE, CONSERVATION & REROUTE: \$336,942**

Field maintenance plays an integral role in being able to provide a quality OHV recreational experience on the public lands managed by the Ridgecrest Field Offices. Our efforts that we plan on performing include the signing of designated routes, management area signing, and trail maintenance using both heavy equipment and hand tools. During maintenance efforts trail treads would be repaired and erosion control features would be installed including such items as rolling dips and lead outs. In order to perform these tasks we are requesting monies for the upkeep and maintenance of our fleet of heavy equipment, the leasing of other pieces of equipment, and the contracting of a full time trail maintenance crew. Additionally, we are requesting funding for salaries to be used by our maintenance staff and multi resources to ensure a quality

recreational experience while maintaining the natural diversity of the management areas.

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT: \$ 251,260**

The FY 2007 Law Enforcement grant request from the OHMVR Commission will help fund Law Enforcement Ranger positions working on OHV enforcement throughout the Field Office managed area, but especially in the Jawbone-Butterbrecht ACEC, Rand Mountains/Fremont Valley Management Area and the Spangler Open Area. This project will continue the efforts by the BLM Ridgecrest Field Office to enforce OHV regulations on large tracts of BLM managed land where OHV use is the single largest recreational demand. This use occurs both within OHV Open Areas as well as on large parcels of land where OHV traffic is authorized only on designated routes. Adjacent to many of these areas of high OHV use are designated Wilderness Areas, the Pacific Crest Trail, other closed areas, and large tracts of private land. An important and time-consuming enforcement task is patrolling and enforcing regulations to remind OHV'ers to remain on designated routes

#### **RESTORATION: \$769,620**

Ridgecrest BLM Field Office proposes to continue restoration of designated closed trails in the Northern Jawbone-Butterbrecht Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Rand Mountains Management Area. Proposed activities include: restoration and camouflaging of closed OHV trails in the limited use area; erosion control of decompacted areas and sites with significant rilling and gullification; Informational signing and outreach; Photo documentation and data collection to assess the efficacy of arid lands restoration in OHV recreation areas; and supporting archeological and biological inventories prior to site restoration. Site restoration will consist of a variety of techniques designed to accelerate natural revegetation and improve viable habitat. The main techniques include vertical mulch (building dead nurse plants), soil decompaction, raking, soil pitting, transferring the natural seedbank, barricading, rock work, broadcast seeding, transplanting, and live planting. Active restoration will take place along the initial line-of-sight of the closed trail and discourage future incursions into the restoration area. The scope of restoration in this grant includes sites that border the Kiavah Wilderness and adjacent to the Desert Tortoise Natural Area and West Rands ACEC, providing large-scale protected habitat for a number of sensitive and listed species. The area surrounding the open areas within the ACEC are limited-use areas and overlay habitat for numerous Federal and State listed species, sensitive species, and species of concern. Among these are the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*), LeConte's Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), and numerous raptor species.

#### **EQUIPMENT: \$ 44,995**

The FY 2007 Equipment grant request from the OHMVR Commission will help fund the acquisition of a mobile command post/first aid and information camper/ATV trailer. The mobile trailer will be used to house law enforcement and EMS staff in remote locations, provide a means of treating injured OHV'ers, function as an information center and transport ATVs/motorcycles. Funds will also purchase an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) and first aid supplies.

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## **PAST PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

### **Law Enforcement**

The 2005 OHV season was busy for the Ridgecrest Law Enforcement Staff. Although we were only staffed at fifty percent of our total positions, we accomplished a great deal. We began the year focusing on our high use recreation areas to include the Jawbone Butterbrecht ACEC, Rand Mountains Special Management Area along with the Kiavah and Golden Valley Wilderness area boundaries. We accomplished our various enforcement tasks with saturation patrols, use of plain-clothes patrols on ATVs and motorcycles, the use of the Kern County Sheriff's helicopter in the air and routine vehicle patrols. Not only did our efforts significantly reduce the number of violations in the temporary closure area but the effort also netted 45 wilderness/off route citations. We continued to use the Kern County Sheriff for the services of their helicopter for joint air patrols and surveillance of our high impact OHV area's. In addition, we implemented an innovative approach this year that we designated as a "Sweep." The Sweep entailed officers using patrol vehicles, ATVs and motorcycles in contacting large congregated OHV groups in an effort to enforce Federal and State OHV laws. This endeavor resulted in several thousand field contacts, numerous warnings/citations, a strong law enforcement presence, and an opportunity to educate as well as reduce natural resource damage through information dissemination.

### **Trail Maintenance**

Staff, contractors, and volunteers coordinated maintenance efforts on the more than 300 miles of designated roads and trails found in the Jawbone ACEC and Rand Mountains.

These efforts included the maintenance of trail tread using several pieces of heavy equipment including a SWECO 480 trail dozer, John Deere bulldozer, and front end loader with gannon box attachment. In addition to trail tread maintenance efforts water control features were installed and maintained such as rolling dips and lead outs. Route markers were also installed and replaced to enhance visitor experience and aid in compliance with the designated route systems of the two management areas.

Upkeep was performed on the seventeen-mile long southern boundary fence of Rand Mountains. This fence assists in delineating the boundary between public lands and private property of California City and directs users onto the designated route system. The boundary fence of the Desert Tortoise Natural Area was monitored and maintained to prevent illegal incursions into this preserve. Additionally, the San Antonio and Dove Springs fences were maintained in the Jawbone-Butterbrecht ACEC. These fences assist in marking the northern boundary of the Dove Springs OHV Open Area and the vehicle closure area at the western end of the Jawbone Canyon OHV Open Area.

### **Visitor Services**

Jawbone Station plays an integral role in the Ridgecrest Field offices management of public lands, serving both OHV enthusiast as well as the general public. During the federal governments fiscal year of 2005 Jawbone Station was open 365 days and served 14,421 visitors.

Additionally, twenty-one information kiosks can be found at the main entry portals into both the Jawbone ACEC and Rand Mountains, which are regularly maintained. These kiosks display visitor information, maps, and brochures for the taking by the visiting public. Through these information kiosks we are able to distribute materials that will make the visitors experience more enjoyable and assist in furthering our management objectives.

### **Trail Monitoring**

Using the Soil Conservation Standards and Guidelines monitoring was conducted on a total of 47.58 miles of designated trails in the Rand Mountains. During these monitoring efforts GPS route inventory data was collected that will be used to update the Rand Mountains route map.

### **Restoration**

Since the fall of 2002, over 2000 sites have been restored in the Ridgecrest Resource Area. The project began in the West Rand ACEC, where over 1000 sites were treated, and effectively returning 20,000 acres to undisturbed critical desert tortoise habitat. Proactive fencing of restoration areas and persistent, effective law enforcement activities has increased the success of these restoration projects. Thirty-seven acres were actively restored, while protecting large lengths of designated closed trails that persist beyond the restoration sites. In the spring of 2004 crews began work in the Jawbone ACEC to complement the work being done the Rand Mountains Management Area. To date, over 1000 sites have been restored outside of the West Rand ACEC. Effectiveness monitoring is ongoing for OHV compliance and revegetation status. Sites with high OHV non-compliance are recorded and given to law enforcement personnel for future collaborative law enforcement activities.